

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ARIZONA ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS TASK FORCE

**April 12, 2007
1:30 p.m., MST**

The Arizona English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force met in Room 1 of the Arizona Senate Building, 1700 W. Washington Street, Phoenix, Arizona. Mr. Alan Maguire, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 1:42 p.m. MST.

1. Call to Order

Present:

Mr. Alan Maguire, Chairman
Dr. John Baracy
Mr. Jim DiCello
Dr. Eugene Garcia
Ms. Margaret Garcia Dugan
Ms. Johanna Haver
Ms. Eileen Klein
Ms. Karen Merritt

Absent:

Ms. Anna Rosas

A quorum was present for the purpose of conducting business.

2. Approval of February 23, 2007 and March 8, 2007 minutes of Task Force meetings

Mr. Alan Maguire reviewed the minutes from February 23, 2007, citing that Ms. Margaret Garcia Dugan had requested two edits: to strike the last sentence on page 3, 2nd paragraph, and to strike the last sentence on page 4, 6th paragraph. Ms. Johanna Haver moved to approve the minutes; Ms. Garcia Dugan seconded the motion. The approval of the February 23, 2007 and March 8, 2007 minutes was unanimous.

3. Presentation and Discussion of the ELL Program Survey – February 2007

Mr. Alan Maguire moved this item to the next meeting.

4. Presentation and Discussion of the Development of English Language Learner Models' Components

Mr. Alan Maguire welcomed back Mr. Kevin Clark, consultant, to continue the discussion on model components from the last meeting. The first objective was to review the work from the previous meeting, the second objective was to borrow from the secondary model described last time and, using the foundations and principles, extend them to an elementary grades model. The elementary grades model completed the K-12 structure. The last objective was to determine how the structure of these models compared with the principles.

Referring to page 2, "The Four Components of a Program Model," in the *From Policy to Practice* handout, Dr. Eugene Garcia asked if "research-based" should be part of the components circle, as it is in the law. He believed the existent models that work should be looked at as a basis for the models. Mr. Maguire answered that he considered "research-based" to be a similar standard of measure as "cost effectiveness", as a guide or tool to ensure that as the models are developed, the Task Force considers both research-based models and cost effective models. He wasn't sure how to incorporate this into the diagram. Dr. Garcia suggested adding the research-based measurement to the diagram on page 3, "Key Principles Underlying the Arizona Law," (Attachment A), similar to how cost effectiveness is shown. Mr. Clark noted this edit.

Mr. Clark continued his review. He moved through page 4's linear depiction of the components from state law (policy) to teachers and ELLs in the classroom (practice) and stated that a skills sequence is being developed and will appear in a future meeting. He reviewed page 5, "English Language Classrooms," commenting that the shaded circle on the left side of the diagram reflected that the Task Force should concentrate on the four hours of English Language Development (ELD) dictated by the law and not the remaining hours of the school day. Mr. Maguire stated that the structure of these other hours is under the domain of ADE or the Superintendent of Public Instruction, not the Task Force. He reviewed the discussion which occurred during the last Task Force meeting and stated that the law was clear on the grouping during the four hours of ELD, but less clear on the grouping of the rest of the day. Dr. Garcia asked why the time frame was not specified on the page 5 diagram. Mr. Maguire replied that the law says not to transfer an ELL student to a mainstream English classroom until he/she has tested fluent English proficient. Therefore, on this particular diagram, it was not necessary to note the time span.

Mr. Clark discussed page 7, "Overview of Legally Required Instructional Programs for English Learners," and noted the change with reference to the academic standards. He alluded also to the handout from the last meeting that references the embedded math, science, and social studies vocabulary in the ELL standards. He continued to page 8, "What is ELD?" The phrase "meet grade-level academic standards" was added to the top of the triangle graphic to reflect Dr. Garcia's comments from two meetings ago. Dr. Garcia commented on the Basic Components of ELD star figure within the triangle graphic. He said that terms such as phonology and lexicon referred more to oral language than reading or written language, and that he would like the terms to more reflect written language, including comprehension. Ms. Margaret Garcia Dugan stated

that comprehension would logically follow from understanding of syntax, phonics, etc., and that as long as the standards are being taught, that is what is important. Dr. Garcia wished to use the word vocabulary instead of lexicon. He stated that the definition of ELD is the ELL standards. Mr. Maguire agreed and stated that the diagram was just a further breakdown of the basis of language which is also reflected in the standards. The diagram breaks speaking, listening, reading, and writing into subcategories to further explain what needs to be taught. Mr. Clark stated that the diagram might have outlived its usefulness as the Task Force now understands the definition of ELD to be the teaching of the ELL standards. Ms. Karen Merritt asked that the diagram be kept at least for oral language where it has validity in defining the speaking component.

Mr. Clark discussed page 9, "General Relationship Between English Language Development (ELD) and Academic Content." Mr. Maguire commented that he believed the academic content portion of the diagram was more of an overlay to ELD, such as a Venn Diagram. As an ELL student gains more proficiency through ELD, more content is overlaid on the ELD. Dr. Garcia requested that it be made into a Venn Diagram. Ms. Merritt raised the question about whether there would be any confusion in using the acronym "ELD" with "LD" or learning disabled. Mr. Jim DiCello stated that "LD" had been replaced by "SLD." Ms. Garcia Dugan stated that this acronym was in the law.

Mr. Clark continued to page 10, "SEI Program Model for Grades 6-12," and commented that grade 6 would likely be a crossover grade, as some schools organize this grade similar to middle school and high school, while others use an elementary school structure for this grade. He discussed the class descriptions for pre-emergent ELL students. Dr. Garcia stated that he believed grammar should be taught across the board, rather than confined to a particular period. Ms. Haver stated that grammar was not part of the normal curriculum, and not taught separately to ELL students as other skills such as reading and writing. A sequential teaching in that hour of grammar skills could be referred to and reinforced in the other classes. Ms. Merritt agreed and wanted the time to be specified to make sure grammar was taught, ensuring accountability for the lessons. Ms. Haver agreed that if no course is specified, the teaching is inconsistent and not sequential.

Ms. Garcia Dugan stated that in the 1980s writing was to be taught by all teachers, but the effect was that no one was accountable, and writing wasn't being taught by anyone. She sees the same scenario for grammar, noting that having a specified time for grammar ensures that it will be taught, and if other teachers want to work with grammar in their lessons as well, they can. Dr. Garcia stated that if the standards are being taught, this is a conceptual versus an operational issue. Dr. Garcia asked Mr. Clark to specify under the grammar block that it was in oral, reading, and writing. Mr. Maguire stated that the class descriptions were to be an aid to teachers in what would be the objective and focus of that particular session. Ms. Haver commented that all the classes should be collaborative. Mr. Clark agreed, and stated that he had specified an hour for grammar because of the immensity of the subject, and, without a dedicated time block, there was no hope of teaching all of the necessary objectives from the ELL standards.

Mr. Clark then went over the intermediate class schedule on the secondary model. Ms. Merritt asked how Language Arts classes differ from the reading and writing classes of the other proficiency levels. Mr. Clark stated that Language Arts would duplicate the curriculum of mainstream classrooms, but with a sheltered content, while the reading class for Basic might tackle how to read expository text, for example. Ms. Merritt asked how these would earn credits toward graduating in four years. Mr. Maguire said this is a challenge. Ms. Merritt asked about block schedules. Mr. Clark stated that this was the first attempt and if this held up, they could look at block or 4 x 4 schedules. Dr. Garcia objected to creating any standard period time such as fifty-three minutes. Mr. Clark stated that the time frame was only an example of the average class period in Arizona schools. Dr. Garcia cautioned against too rigid a model and asked what happens if the model the Task Force creates doesn't work. Mr. Maguire stated that the Task Force has four years to research the effects of the models and see what works.

Dr. John Baracy asked for the process on how the diagram on page 10 was reached. Mr. Clark explained that he moved from policy to principles to the structure of the model, which that page reflected. The course offerings came from looking at the standards and building a sample coursework from the standards. Dr. Baracy asked for the research on this model. Mr. Clark stated that there was no data or longitudinal study results because schools have not been using a four hour ELD block as the law stipulates. There is research related to time-on-task, utility of discrete skills teaching, and minimization of grouping variance to maximize learning. He cannot say what an ELL program like this will look like with four hours of ELD the way the law stipulates. Dr. Baracy asked if he could find research on alternative methods. Mr. Clark said that he could, but such methods would not comply with the law's restrictions.

Mr. Maguire stated that he has done some research. He came to the conclusion that the Task Force is trying to build something different, based on what he isn't seeing from the field. The pieces that come together reflect the informed opinion of people in Arizona and around the country of what will work under the Arizona law. He stated that the ties between AZELLA, the ELL standards, and the English academic standards are the basis of the models. Dr. Garcia worried about the specificity and prescriptiveness of the model, although he agreed that AZELLA and the standards are the backbone. Mr. Maguire raised the question that if all the state needed were those three things which are already in existence, then why was a new law written with all the specifics and why was the Task Force charged with developing a model? Ms. Garcia Dugan stated that there had not been enough guidance on what SEI and ELD are. Ms. Merritt commented that many ELL practitioners would welcome the specificity. Mr. DiCello commented that if the Task Force didn't specify these standards, it would not be fulfilling its task. Mr. Maguire added that the model is intended to be something that, if followed, will result in ELLs normally learning English in one year. Nowhere in the testimony or research has he seen current practices demonstrating this. There isn't much research to show the effect of instructing with a specific alignment of the state assessment, ELL standards, and state academic standards. The next goal will be to take this secondary school model and discuss how it might work at an elementary level.

The Task Force took a short break at 3:26pm and reconvened at 3:39pm.

Mr. Clark drew a diagram for a possible elementary school model; he blocked out four hours and designated 45 minutes of phonology and conversation, 60 minutes of grammar, 60 minutes for reading, 60 minutes for vocabulary and 15 minutes for pre-writing for the pre-emergent or emergent ELL student. He indicated that this would not include grade-level language arts for the pre-emergent and emergent levels of proficiency. Mr. Maguire asked for clarification on the differences between the elementary and secondary models. Mr. Clark replied that this is for a self-contained environment. Mr. Maguire stressed that the time allocation reflect the ELL standards for those grade levels.

Mr. Clark then discussed the time allocations for the ELLs at the Basic level: 30 minutes for Phonology, 60 minutes for grammar, 60 minutes for reading, 60 minutes for vocabulary, and 30 minutes for writing. At the Intermediate proficiency level, phonology is taught for 15 minutes and writing for 45 minutes, with the other areas' times remaining the same. Mr. DiCello stated the importance of establishing a minimum class size for schools that have a low ELL population. Dr. Garcia asked for clarification on how the number of minutes for each component was allocated, and if there had been research or observation of these time periods. Mr. Maguire replied that based on what has been shown in the presentations made by schools and districts and the data from the surveys, the Task Force must provide guidance on what is to be accomplished within the four hours in order for ELL students to gain proficiency in one year. Given the internal consistency of the ELL standards, the time allocations reflect the percentages of objectives in each strand. This is the logical course to move students through the proficiency standards to progress to the next level of proficiency. Dr. Garcia asked that there be some analysis to show the correlation of time allocation with proficiency standards, particularly for pre-emergent and emergent students. That could then form the research basis for the model. He also asked what kind of staff will implement the model, their quality of instruction, and what kinds of endorsements they have. Mr. DiCello said that had been covered in the diagram on page 7. He added that, in addition, they would have to be certified for their grade span.

Dr. Baracy believed it was better to allow flexibility as long as the standards were being taught, similar to freedom given to content area standards in the 20 credit hours for high school graduation. Mr. Maguire felt the time on task needed for each task is derived from the ELL standards. Dr. Garcia suggested calling it a "mapping." Mr. Maguire agreed, saying the goal was to make this explicit rather than implicit. Ms. Haver suggested a weekly or monthly plan rather than day to day. Mr. Maguire said this is an attempt to strike a median with a strong guidance on how to proceed, with the knowledge that there are alternative models that could be submitted for approval. Mr. DiCello reminded the Task Force that a model must be submitted that has at least the minimum of what is specified in the law, so specifics are necessary. Dr. Garcia worried about being too prescriptive; he recognized that setting boundaries was necessary, but he was concerned that too many restrictions could create a barrier to learning. He suggested a range per week and signs of progress to show compliance. Ms. Haver agreed that there needed to be some flexibility for various areas where students show unexpected strength or weakness.

5. Presentation and Discussion of Upcoming Task Force Activities

Mr. Alan Maguire said that the mapping exercise would be useful for an upcoming meeting, and that in the meantime, the Task Force needs to continue moving along, and will next talk about implementation. He asked for the May availability dates of the Task Force members.

6. Call to the Public

Mr. Alan Maguire made a call to the public at 4:12 p.m. There were four speakers present.

Ms. Frances Acosta, ELL Program Facilitator for Marana USD, spoke first, giving copies of her presentation (Attachment B) to the Task Force. She urged that the Task Force produce multiple models, including a model for school districts with a small ELL population. In the Marana Unified School District, there are 13,000 students in five schools and a total of 300 ELLs, about 3% of the population. In addition, the ELL students are scattered across grades, with an average of 1-18 ELLs in an elementary school, 9-26 in middle school, and 13-30 at a high school. Schools are already planning for the 2007-2008 school year with teacher hiring and class schedules. If the models dictate a certain class size, they will have to change classes, purchase supplies, and possibly hire more teachers. For a school district like hers, the grouping worked for higher ELL numbers, but not in schools with a small ELL population. She asked that the Task Force consider the use of the SIOP model and content-based instruction. She asked that they also consider the funding, since the statutes only fund ELL students for two years. She was concerned that ELL students would not meet graduation requirements with the four required hours of ELD.

Ms. Jeannie Favela from Sunnyside School District provided copies of her presentation (Attachment C). She stressed the importance of “real kids,” including differences between ELLs with much educational background versus ELLs with no schooling background. She asked if the models are going to move students to proficiency in one year's time. She discussed research from studies in the National Literacy Panel. Many practices were reviewed in these studies, including language development using content. She asked how the models will be implemented. Ms. Favela stressed that the quality of instruction is very important and stated that teachers need to be well-trained and endorsed. She believed the SIOP model could extend the ELD period to include more content. In her handout she proposed an alternate model for secondary schools. Ms. Favela then raised the question about whether the history of the student should be seen as a burden or as a resource and how this would affect the model. She urged the Task Force not to prescribe strict lock step programs, but to include flexibility.

Ms. Julia Lindberg from Sunnyside School District spoke next, asking that the Task Force consider a more specific scope and sequence for training teachers on SEI. Although many teachers have taken the fifteen hours for a provisional SEI endorsement and some are working toward the full 45 hour endorsement, many do not feel prepared to deal with ELL students,

especially at the intermediate level. There are financial implications for districts to hire the most highly qualified and endorsed teachers.

Last, Mr. Salvador Gabaldón noted that the Task Force has debated between a highly prescribed model and a flexible model. He considers there to be a continuum between highly prescriptive and highly flexible. He suggested making two models at each end of the spectrum and then studying the effects of these two models to see which works better. This would allow schools and districts to decide which works better for them, and the results could be judged by the Task Force.

7. Discussion of future meetings

The next Task Force meeting will be on April 26th at 1:30 p.m.

8. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.